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The Local Angle:

REGIONAL INFORMATION OFFICES

The U.S. Department of Labor operates through 10 regional offices located in major cities across the country. If you want a local angle on a news or feature story provided through this service--or have a direct news inquiry--you may contact one of the offices listed below. This listing includes the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Assistant Regional Directors for Information and the states in their regions:

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BLACK FEDERAL OFFICIAL PROMOTES
CONCEPT OF 'THINK, BUY MINORITY'

WASHINGTON -- William J. Harris, a black man of vision with a sense of fair play, demands the same kind of humane commitment from the Labor Department.

Harris, a 19-year veteran of the Labor Department, is director of the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Office of Investigation and Compliance. A robust man of 50, William Harris brings a warm personal touch to his involvement in the ETA programs.

As director, Harris is directly involved with some 2,600 public employment offices and 430 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) prime sponsors across the country.

His office insures that applicants and participants are given fair, non-discriminatory treatment in ETA funded programs.

"Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, complaints have become fewer and farther between," says Harris, "and in the last two or three years we've had almost no problem."

The primary responsibility for supervision and policy-making decisions affecting the public employment offices rests with the U.S. Employment Service in ETA, Harris points out.

Protecting jobseekers from any discrimination in public employment offices is only one of Harris' several roles. He also promotes more minority business contracts by ETA.

Harris says ETA is firmly committed to turning around the "negative trends" of minority businesses. Citing the unusually high failure rate among minority business as a "matter of great concern", Harris added that "we're getting ETA to thinking and buying minority."

Explaining the function of a special review unit which is also under his jurisdiction, Harris said:

(MORE)

"In 1969 the assistant secretary for manpower decided that he needed a staff to investigate complaints of mismanagement and fraud in manpower programs. This staff, [directed to report only to the assistant secretary,] was reorganized in 1973 and combined with the Manpower Administration's Equal Employment Opportunity Office to form the office of Investigation and Compliance.

When asked what kinds of problems cross his desk, Harris uses the case of some Hispanic contractors who complained they were systematically excluded from the administration's contracts. They contended that non-minority businessmen had the inside (track) and had the contracts "sewn up" before they were publicized.

ETA is now stressing the use of minority contractors. The Small Business Administration, certifies as eligible many firms that are 51 percent or more minority-owned.

Harris maintains that the greatest problem facing minority businessmen is the lack of funds to train minority entrepreneurs in all phases of business operation.

The second dilemma of the minority businessperson is that information on how to operate the "Mom and Pop stores" that abound in the ghetto is not available in local school systems. Labeling the overall problems of minorities as "systemic difficulties", Harris expressed that "for years people have used majority business operators so they are naturally reluctant to try someone new and different."

Harris feels most minority businesses have no major problems with obtaining loans from banks. However, he expressed that they are sometimes required to attend training sessions prior to receiving bank loans. These sessions include financial management, bookkeeping, advertising, and marketing seminars, all designed to increase the chance of becoming sucessful.

Harris' voice rises and his expression gets stern when he talks about "assuring that minorities and women get a fair chance for every job in the agency I work for."

(MORE)

With decentralization of ETA -- and a staff reduction of some 20% since 1972 -- there are fewer opportunities for minorities and women to join the agency, he explains. "This decentralization," he says, "reflects what's been happening over the past several years as states and localities have taken over operation of manpower training programs.

"But while the number of total job opportunities has declined, we're going to insist that everyone be able to compete on a fair basis for those jobs and promotions that are available. And let me point out that, while there is room for improvement, ETA has a higher proportion of minorities and women on its staff than most federal and state agencies."

Harris, a dynamic man who brings forcefulness and positive direction to his job, feels the Employment and Training Administration could have an even greater impact on American life.

But, he adds, this period of recession and unemployment would have been much worse had ETA not been here.

# # #

LABOR DEPARTMENT MAN BECOMES FIRST BLACK
TO HEAD CABINET AGENCY BUDGET OFFICE

WASHINGTON -- Charles E. Pugh, a career U.S. Labor Department official, has been appointed director of the department's Office of Budget by Fred G. Clark, assistant secretary of labor for administration and management.

Pugh, 30, is the first black to direct the overall budget activities of a Cabinet-level agency. His new post includes supervising analysis of the department's budget proposals and assistance in preparing and coordinating them with top agency officials, the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress.

Pugh has been acting director of the budget office since July 1975, when his predecessor, Travis A. Knight, became assistant administrator of pension and welfare benefit programs in the department's Labor-Management Services Administration. Pugh previously had been deputy director of the office since October 1973.

A former special assistant to the assistant secretary for administration and management, Pugh has held various other financial management posts since joining the department in 1967.

He has been cited four times for outstanding performance of duty and has been listed in "Outstanding Young Men of America."

The Shubuta, Miss., native received his B.S. degree in mathematics in 1967 from Jackson (Miss.) State University. While there, he twice won the Dansby-Bond Award for outstanding scholarship and student leadership.

Pugh also was a Foreign Affairs Scholar under a joint Ford Foundation-U.S. State Department program for exceptional students and potential Foreign Service officers.

He is president of the Washington, D.C., chapter of Phi Beta Sigma social fraternity.

Pugh and his wife, Merlean, have two children -- Carlos, 8; and Fetima, 3. They live in Washington, D.C.

# # #

NATIONAL SOCIAL ACTION AGENCIES
RECEIVE LABOR DEPARTMENT FUNDS

WASHINGTON -- Three national social action agencies are receiving $5,029,622 to develop employment and training projects and provide technical assistance to their local affiliates, Secretary of Labor John T. Dunlop announced.

Existing contracts with the organizations were extended one year by the Employment and Training Administration (formerly Manpower Administration) of the Department of Labor, in the following amounts:

-- Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America (OIC), whose 130 affiliates prepare inner-city residents for jobs, $2,620,000;

-- Jobs for Progress, Inc., which serves the Spanish-speaking primarily in the Southwest through 45 SER (service, employment, and redevelopment) programs, $1,500,000; and

-- National Urban League, whose 70 metropolitan affiliates help black and other minority group members prepare for employment, $909,622.

Services to be offered under the announced funding include familiarizing local staff with CETA procedures and policies; training and information about Department of Labor Policy; budget and fiscal assistance; and management and administrative assistance.

In addition to funds for national administrative expenses, the three organizations' local affiliates apply to state and local governments for operational funds under Title I of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). These are used to conduct classroom and on-the-job training, work experience, and similar programs to improve the employability of low-income people.

During the fiscal year 1975, ending June 30, the affiliates received these amounts of operational funds from state and local CETA prime sponsors: OIC, $37 million, SER, $19 million, and Urban League, $16 million.

# # #

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED
FOR NEW PROPOSED WASHINGTON PLAN

WASHINGTON -- The comment period on a new proposal plan for hiring more minorities in the Washington, D. C., area construction industry has been extended until Dec. 22, the U.S. Department of Labor announced.

The new plan, which will cover more construction projects and affect more trades, was proposed in the Sept. 5 Federal Register. The original comment period expired Oct. 7.

Bernard E. DeLury, assistant secretary of labor for employment standards, said:

"Many persons have requested that the comment time be extended. To make sure we develop the best plan possible, we are giving everyone a chance for input."

The current Washington Plan was imposed on June 1, 1970, and was scheduled to expire July 10, 1975. However, it has been extended indefinitely until a new plan is approved.

The Washington Plan now covers employers with federal and federally assisted construction contracts and subcontracts in excess of $10,000 if the cost of the federally involved project exceeds $500,000. Under the proposed plan the cost of the project is irrevelant for coverage.

In addition to the 12 trades now covered -- asbestos workers, boiler makers, electricians, elevator constructors, glaziers, iron workers, lathers, painters & paperhangers, pipefitters & steamfitters, plumbers, sheetmetal workers and tile & terrazzo workers -- 11 more trades will come under the plan. They are bricklayers, carpenters, cement masons, laborers, operating engineers, millwrights, pile drivers, plasterers, roofers, sprinkler fitters and stone & marble masons.

The minority employment goals for each trade are expressed as a percentage of total man hours worked by that trade. Currently the goals for covered trades are expressed as percentage ranges from which prospective contractors select a goal. In the proposed plan, a single percentage goal is included for each trade for each year of the plan. By executing a signed bid each prospective contractor is deemed to be committed to the prescribed goal.

(More)

Final goals under the proposed three-year plan are to be met by Sept. 30, 1978. Interim goals are established for Sept. 30, 1976, and Sept. 30, 1977.

The goals apply to all construction work of a covered employer, not just to work on the contract or subcontract.

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1 OUT OF EVERY 10 WORKERS IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY
HAD JOB-RELATED INJURY, ILLNESS, 1974 SURVEY SHOWS

WASHINGTON -- For the third straight year, on the average, about 1 out of every 10 workers in private industry experienced a job-related injury and illness. (Some workers had more than one injury or illness during 1974.)

The results of the 1974 survey of occupational injuries and illnesses in the private sector of the American economy were reported by the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This is the first BLS report of this survey where direct comparison of occupational safety and health experience for the total private sector of the economy is presented. References to earlier reports must be made with caution because of different industrial coverages. For example 1972-1973 direct comparisons excluded data for agriculture, railroads and mining industries for which data were unavailable in 1972.

Following are some key survey findings:

-- About 5.9 million work-related injuries and illnesses occurred during 1974, a decrease of about 163,000 from 1973. This decrease was entirely in the cases which did not involve lost worktime.

-- The incidence rate (number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers) for all industries combined fell 5.5 percent -- from 11.0 in 1973 to 10.4 in 1974.

-- 5,900 work-related fatalities were reported in 1974, compared to 5,700 for 1973. This change may not be, however, statistically significant in view of the sampling process.

-- About 31 million workdays were lost due to work-related injuries and illnesses during 1974. Translated into a measure of severity the incidence rate of lost workdays per 100 full-time workers rose from 53.3 in 1973 to 54.6 in 1974 -- approximately 2 percent.

(MORE)

The survey is a federal-state program in which reports are received and processes by state statistical grant agencies participating with the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The survey, response to which is mandatory, involves a national sample of over 200,000 private employers. Another 450,000 employers are included in the survey so the States can produce similar estimates.

Reported occupational injury and illness data are based on the records employers must maintain under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA).

Data conforming to OSHA definitions of recordable occupational injuries and illnesses for coal and lignite mining, and metal and nonmetal mining, and for railroads were provided by the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation, respectively.

The survey relates to employers in private industries. Excluded were self-employed individuals and employees in federal, state, and local government units. In a separate reporting system, agencies of the federal government are filing reports comparable to those of private industry with the Secretary of Labor.

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TWO COMPANIES AGREE TO SETTLEMENT
IN SAFETY DISCRIMINATION DISPUTES

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has reached a settlement with Hughes Tool Company, Houston, Tex., in a safety dispute involving an alleged threat against employees exercising their rights under federal law.

The complainant, William D. Dixon, alleged that during a safety meeting a company representative threatened adverse action against employees who might call OSHA regarding job safety protection.

In the settlement, Hughes Tool Company agreed to post a notice to employees for a period of at least 60 consecutive days affirming the company's prohibition of discrimination against workers for exercising rights under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

In addition, the company agreed to comply with all terms and provisions of the notice, including a requirement that OSHA be informed of steps it has taken to comply.

A second settlement was reached with Big Valley Plastics Company of Sumner, Wash., in a job discrimination issue involving a Tacoma worker.

The voluntary settlement resolved a discrimination complaint filed with OSHA by foreman Glenn Fitzpatrick. His complaint alleged that the employer had discriminatorily discharged him July 27, 1973, in a dispute over employee exposure to hazardous working conditions. At least two employees, including an associate of Fitzpatrick's, had suffered hand amputations due to on-the-job accidents. Fitzpatrick had taken issue with management about alleged malfunctioning machinery related to these industrial accidents.

As part of the settlement agreement with OSHA, the company has made full restitution for wages--a total of $1,278.58--covering the period from termination until Fitzpatrick found other employment. The employer also has agreed to remove from company records any reference to Fitzpatrick's termination and to post a notice to employees on this matter for a period of 60 consecutive days.

The complaints and settlements are related to the provision in the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 that employees are protected against discrimination, discharge, or other adverse action by their employer for exercising their rights under the Act.

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REAL EARNINGS
FIGURES UNCHANGED

WASHINGTON -- Real gross average weekly earnings and real spendable earnings of nonfarm workers in the private sector of the economy remained unchanged in October, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Preliminary real earnings figures for October--covering full-time and part-time workers on production or nonsupervisory jobs in the private nonfarm sector of the economy--were released by the Bureau.

Real earnings--or earnings in constant dollars--are calculated by adjusting earnings in current dollars for changes in the Consumer Price Index.

Real gross average weekly earnings were unchanged from September to October, after allowance for the usual seasonal change. A 0.7 percent rise in the Consumer Price Index offset a 0.4 percent increase in average hourly earnings and a 0.3 percent rise in average weekly hours.

Over the year, real average weekly earnings were down 1.9 percent. A rise of 7.6 percent in the Consumer Price Index and a drop of 0.8 percent in average weekly hours countered a 6.4 percent increase in average hourly earnings.

Before adjustment for the increase in the Consumer Price Index and for seasonal change, average weekly earnings were $168.33 in October, compared with 159.51 a year earlier.

Real spendable earnings--average real weekly pay of all workers reduced by Social Security and Federal income tax rates applicable to a married worker with three dependents who earned the average amount--were unchanged from September, seasonally adjusted.

Over the year, real spendable earnings were up 1.9 percent because of a reduction in Federal income tax rates which went into effect May 1, 1975.

# # #

THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX--OCTOBER 1975

WASHINGTON -- The Consumer Price Index rose 0.6 percent in October, before seasonal adjustment, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported.

The rise was due to higher prices for variety of consumer goods and services--particularly meats, dairy products, coffee, clothing, new cars, fuel oil, mortage interest rates, and auto insurance.

Prices declined for some items such as fresh fruits, poultry, and gasoline. The October CPI was 164.6 (1967=100), 7.6 percent higher than a year ago.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the CPI rose 0.7 percent in October. In September, the CPI increased 0.5 percent. The food index rose 1.3 percent in October, following 2 months of relatively little change. The index for commodities other than food rose 0.3 percent after seasonal adjustment, the same as in September. The rise in the services index of 0.6 percent in October compares with 1.0 percent in September.

In the food index, prices of grocery store foods rose 1.5 percent in October after seasonal adjustment, following a decline of 0.2 percent in September and no change in August. Beef prices turned up in October after declining in the preceding 2 months. Pork prices continued to rise rapidly, and prices for dairly products, coffee, and processed fruits and vegetables increased more than in recent months.

These increases were partially offset by lower prices for some other foods. Prices of poultry and eggs fell. Fresh fruit prices declined sharply for the third consecutive month. Cereal and bakery products trended down for the seventh consecutive month. Sugar prices also move down after increasing in the preceding 2 months.

The rise in the nonfood commodities index of 0.3 percent in October, after seasonal adjustment, compares with an average monthly increase of 0.6 percent in the first 8 months of this year.

In October, the fuel oil and coal index rose 1.8 percent, one of the largest monthly increases this year. The gasoline and motor oil index declined less than it usually does in October and as a result was 0.9 percent higher after seasonal adjustment.

(More)

Prices for other commodities such as household durables, tires, and footwear continued to rise. Prices for appareal other than footwear increased 0.1 percent.

The new car index declined 0.1 percent after seasonal adjustment. Before seasonal adjustment, the new car index rose 2.7 percent. Prices of 1976 models were included in the CPI for the first time in October and will continue to be phased in over the next several months.

The used car index also declined in October, following a small rise in September and sharp increase this summer.

The services index increased 0.6 percent in October, about the same as the average monthly increase in the first 8 months of this year. Among major categories of consumer services, charges for transportation services rose 0.6 percent in October, after advancing 3.0 percent in September. The index for household services other than rent rose 0.4 percent, after seasonal adjustment.

The rent index rose 0.7 percent, the largest monthly increase this year. The medical care services index rose 1.2 percent after seasonal adjustment, a larger increase than in recent months.

# # #

Dear Consumer

Tune in—Tune-Up

By Virginia Knauer
Special Assistant to the President
and Director
Office of Consumer Affairs
Department of Health, Education and Welfare

"Improve gas mileage. Get a tune-up."

You may have seen these words in many ads selling automobile parts and services. But are they true?

According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), the answer is yes—and no. Yes, if you have driven your car a year without a tune-up or approximately 10,000 miles. No, if the car is seldom used or is well maintained and routinely checked.

To tell for sure whether your car could use a tune-up, AAA says look for these symptoms: (1) a drop in fuel economy and general performance; (2) rough idling; (3) hard starting; (4) excessive stalling during warm-up and any recurrent stalling after warm-up; (5) persistant delay or "hesitation" on acceleration; (6) gasoline or exhaust odors; (7) engine misfiring, and (8) any unusual variation from normal operation.

If your car shows some of these symptoms, the next question is how to pick a good tune-up shop. According to AAA, a tune-up is basically just two things: (1) approximately one hour of a mechanic's time to inspect the car, and (2) the time charge for installing any needed equipment plus the charge for the parts themselves.

The trouble comes, however, when you turn your car over to a dealer or service station and just say "tune it up.' '

To get the proper tune-up—and no extra repair bills—AAA suggests that you make these few inquiries before you leave your car:

• If you take the car to a company offering a "special sale" on tune-ups, find out what is covered. The sale, for example, may only cover standard American six-cylinder cars. The price displayed means nothing if you happen to have a foreign car or one with a V-8 motor.

• If you take your car to a service station or dealer as a result of a tune-up ad, find out exactly what is included in the package and what is extra. Usually only the shop time for initial basic service is specified in the ad. The new parts you may need—points, plugs, an air filter—will probably be extra.

• Check whether the mechanic is certified. Certain states or counties require that car mechanics be certified. However, even in areas where this is not mandatory, many mechanics can get certification for training from the National Institute for Automotive Service and other comparable institutions.

• Look for a "shop" where they want you to describe your car's symptoms. If possible, you should talk directly to the mechanic who will be working on your car. In any case, write down the list of symptoms for the mechanic to refer to.

Week of December 1, 1975

FILLERS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration seeks to improve the nation's work environment by setting and enforcing safety and health standards for workers.

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor sets and enforces job safety and health standards for workers and trains employees in proper occupational safety and health practices.

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An assistant secretary of labor heads the U.S. Department of Labor's Labor-Management Services Administration, which enforces laws affecting certain activities of unions and private pension and welfare benefit plans, as well as veterans' reemployment rights.

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The Labor-Management Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor receives and makes available to members of the public reports on benefit provisions and financial conditions of employee welfare and retirement plans and establishes fiduciary, vesting and funding standards, for certain plans.

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